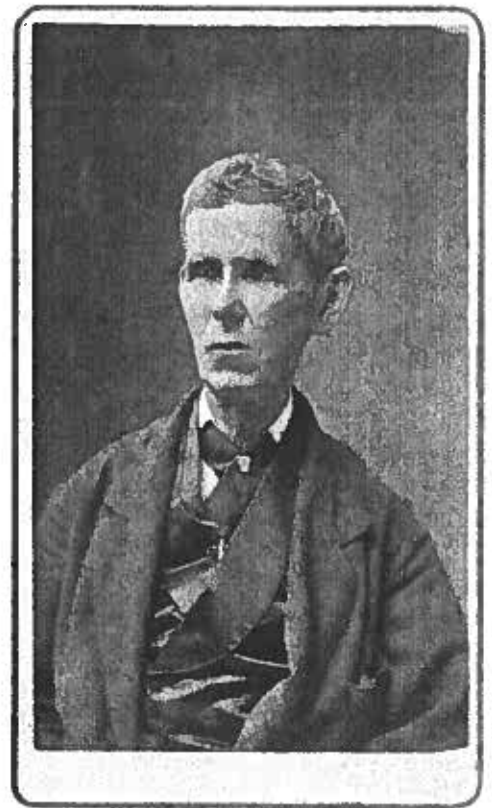


Persons - Aigin



James Aigin

Research Library
Buffalo History Museum
1 Museum Court
Buffalo, NY 14216



To the Buffalo Historical Society

Gentleman

On the 24 of December 1813 the British army under the command of Major Gen l. Riel [sic] landed below Conjocety Creek 4 miles below Buffalo. The night was exstreamly [sic] dark the snow was about 2 feet deep. The alarm gun was fired our picket guard met their pickets thay exchanged vollys [sic] then fell back an the main body we had in Buffalo about 250 horsemen under the command of the brave Col. Boughton who began the march for Black Rock with all the force that could be mustered in the villiege [sic] as they passed our house which was about half a mile from Main Street. My father shouldered his musket & fell in the ranks with the passing collum [sic]. My mother stood by the side of the road holding a candle to light thair [sic] way. Thare [sic] must have passed her more then 1000 men but many fell by the way side whose health became poor thay [sic] not being able to proceed themselves they thay encuraged others to go a head. The battle became general before daylight thare [sic] was a constant report of firearms till after daylight when it slackened. As my mother stood along side of the road with 3 or 4 other neighbering [sic] woman who lived about 160 rods from the road on the opposite side in some flats built by Col. Swift's regiment [sic] the year before anxious to heare [sic] how the battle went. Soon up came a man stating that the British were defeated. On hearing this my mother returned into the house to get breakfast. Soon our retreating troops came up the officer at the head of the collum [sic] said for god sake woman make your escape for the British Indians are in our rear. Thay [sic] will kill every one of you. On hearing this these neighboour woman ran for their homes. I being verry [sic] much frightened [sic] ran with them. Seposing [sic] my mother was with them but when we got to thare [sic] homes I found my mother was not with them. I amediately [sic] ran back to find her but when I got to the road I found I could not cross as the retreating collum [sic] was crouding [sic] on each other so that I could not pass between them. Lieutenant Seely of the Black Rock Artillery [sic] co. was riding a horse attached to a six pounder. He was doing all in his power to save the piece. Major John G. Camp was cloase [sic] behind him on horseback cursing at the men to get out of the way & let the cannon pass. Soon as I could cross the road I ran into this house whare [sic] I found my mother getting breakfast. I told her the Indians were cloase [sic] behind me. She had no time to put on anything but started just as she was bareheaded. As we went out of the side door the Indians came into the front door. We followed the rear of the troops as the British advance guard & our rear were continusly [sic] firing at each other. The whistling of bullets [sic] was constant. A big dog of ours which followed us was making great efforts [sic] to catch one of them but did not. She was far more fortunate then a poor fellow who was beside me. He recd one. I asked him whare [sic] he was wounded. He said the ball lodged near his heart. As he staggered [sic] two men took hold of him but what his fate was I know not. When our men got up abreast of the old grave yard thay [sic] broke in every derection [sic]. Hearing firing on our left right & rear we ware at a loss to know which way to go. Seeing a crowd and rising piece of ground on the opposite side of Main Street we went to them. We found the brave Col. Cyrenus [sic] Chapin in command of an old iron 9 pounder which had been condemed [sic] propped up on some blocks. Thare [sic] was about 60 or 80 persons behind her. The enemy was at that time marching up the road. About opposite the old grave yard the old cannon was fired. It was a good shot. It made an opening through their collum [sic]. The col. was much pleased. She was again loded [sic] & fired but this time she flew off her blocks some distance [sic] in the rear. The col. then took out of his pocket a white

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handkerchief which he fastened to the point of his sword and started down towards Townsend & Coits block saying Every man for himself & the devel [sic] for us all. We then started for the Indian Villeige [sic] it being the only opening left. I should think thare [sic] must have been 500 persons who retreated in that derection [sic] at that time. We had got but a short distance [sic] on our way when a man on horseback came riding along hollawing [sic] that the British Indians was in our rear. We then put into the woods thought we would strike Leach's the ferry. We soon saw some Indians we tried to hide in some brush but to our great releif [sic] thay [sic] proved to be the Farmers Brother & some of his warriors. He told us thare [sic] was no British a coming. We suffered much indeed from cold & snow. We ware [sic] thinley [sic] clad after traveling some some distance [sic] toward Leach's ferry through the woods we heard firing in that derection [sic] we then turned back for the Indian villeige [sic] road we went within a short distance [sic] of Main Street I should think not more than 160 rods from the Main Street whare [sic] we stood for some time looking at the enemy we could see all thay [sic] ware doing in the street. My mother cold hungrey [sic] & weary wanted to go in but I prevailed on her not to go that night. We slept in a barn about 1 ½ miles out of the villeige [sic] owned by a French man by the name of De Sparr. In the morning we returned into the villeige [sic] whare [sic] we found the street filled with almost all kind of goods the only persons that we found in the place was the widdow [sic] St. John and her family. The British had fell back to Black Rock whare [sic] their boats lay thare [sic] was still left not burnt about 8 or 10 houses. In one opposite of Mrs. St. Johns lay the body of Mrs. Lovejoy, wife of Major Lovejoy of Genrl Hull's army. He was her 2nd husband. Mrs. St. John asked my mother to go over and see her. She was dressed in a black silk dress. She appeared to be about 40 years old, much of a lady in her appearence [sic]. She lay on her back on the bed cords with her head down between the meshes the bed cords. She was tomehawked [sic] in the head. She was not scalped. Her long black hair reached to the floor clotted with blood. Mrs. St. John told my mother that she saw her contending with the Indians about some dresses. She tried to pull them away from them. It was currently reported the [sic] her eldest son by the name of Kemble by her first husband was made prisenor [sic] by the British that he applied to General Rial for permission to go & burry [sic] his mother but instead of doing so made his esscape [sic] on the 3rd day they burnt the ballence [sic] of the villeige [sic] with her in one of the building excepting Mrs. St. Johns house that she lived in, Reeses blacksmith shop on Washington Street, the log jail which would not burn & Mrs. Pratts barn which was out of the villeige [sic] it was said thay [sic] ware afraid to venture that far from the main street. We stopped a short time with Mrs. St. John. We then went down the Black Rock Road (I believe it is now called Niagara Street) to whare [sic] our home had been but found the house and all it contained burned to the ground. Thare [sic] was about 300 bushels of potatoes and a barrell [sic] of sourcrout [sic] well roasted. We made a hearty meal of it as we ware verry [sic] hungrey [sic]. We then returned to Mrs. St. Johns whare [sic] we staid a short time from thence we put out east towards Williamsville in hopes we would find the rest of the family. When we got about opposite the guide board road we met Col. Mallory, Adjatent [sic] Totman of the Canada Volunteers with Lieutenant Riddle of the 15th United States Reg. Army going in thay [sic] stopped and asked us if we had been in the villiege [sic] & ware [sic] just coming out. We told them we had & had just left. Thay [sic] wanted to know if we saw any British. We told them we had not then enquired if we knew what horsemen that just then appeared in sight was. We told them we thought thay [sic] ware some of Col. Baughtons [sic] men thay [sic] went in & we continued on our journey. That night we staid [sic] 14 miles from Buffalo at Harris Hill. The news soon came that the brave Totman was killed that night. His body was brought thare [sic]

by his men. I saw it he wore a a [sic] white blanket coat bound [sic] with red binding his head was badly hacked. The men that found the body & likewise Col. Mallory said he was killed opposite the Guide Board road. The Col. said as they road in thay [sic] soon discovered [sic] that those horsemen were British --- thay [sic] immediately [sic] turned [sic] their horses back the British after them as thay [sic] passed the Guide Board road a party of British rose up from behind the fence [sic] and fired at them. Totman fell & when found his sword was beside him broke in 2 peaces [sic] it was seposed [sic] thay [sic] broke it over his head. The next night we staid [sic] at a tavern at Ransom's grove 21 miles from Buffalo. That night a file of soldiers commanded by Dr. Tourtalot of the Canada Volunteers came thare [sic]. Thay [sic] had in charge a fierce looking Indien [sic] which was captured in Benjamin Hodges house near the Cold Spring. The next morning thay [sic] started east with him. After going about 3 miles thay [sic] said he grew ugly & would not go. At all events thay [sic] shot him & buried him along side the road. Up to this time we had not heard anything of the ballence [sic] of our family only the report that my father had been killed. We started the next morning & after traveling about 10 miles we met him & our hired man who had on the morning of the 29th before day light yoked up a yoke of oxens in to the waggan [sic], threw in some beds & other articles took my younger brother put him on the waggan [sic] & started out east with the team. My father being cut off by the enemy on the retreat could not return to take charge of his family. He had been 4 days seeking us. He found the hired man with the team & my brother near Batava [sic]. He took the team & turned his face toward Buffalo. We met him about 28 miles from Buffalo. The panic between Buffalo & Batava [sic] was great. The people for 30 miles locked up their houses & fled for their lives. We being verry [sic] hungrey [sic] & wore out from fatiuge [sic] we took possession [sic] of a house where [sic] we found everything needfull [sic]. We staid [sic] thare [sic] not far from a week. When we again started for Buffalo we made a halt at Williamsville where [sic] we staid 2 or 3 weeks after this we returned to our desolate home. We had a green log barn which did not burn out of which we hade a dwelling to live. It was a dismal winter with the sound of the British bugle on the Canada side & not knowing what hour they would make us another visit Buffalo in ruins nothing remaining but her salutary chimney stacks which strongly puts me in mind of a sceine [sic] in Volneys ruins where the fox sets vewing [sic] the desolation [sic] around him with the statement that heare [sic] once stood a powerfull [sic] city the people came in from the neighbering [sic] towns & took everything thay [sic] could find. Even the iron in the fire places up to the upper story thay [sic] dug the iron out of them. It was said that the British found General Hall's muster roll on which was 4000 names & thay [sic] became alarmed whether that was so or not. That night thay [sic] moved down to Black Rock where [sic] their boats lay. Thay [sic] ware [sic] evedently [sic] afraid of a surprise.

General Cass* who was in Buffalo a few days after its destruction he say after a carefull [sic] enquirey [sic] I am satisfied the whole British force was not over 650 while ours was from 2500 to 3000. In this I thing the general was somewhat mistaken [sic]. It was reported at the time that the whole British force was about 1100. I believe had 500 brave men attacked them on the 2nd day we would have drove them off or captured them. If we had the 125 regulars which that coward Genlr. George McClure took with him away from Buffalo a few days before as a body guard the exscuse [sic] he made for taking them away that was mobed [sic] by the brave Col. Chapin with thase [sic] regulars on the morning of the 29. I have not a doubt we should have defeated them as to his been mobed [sic] by Col. Chapin it was false. Col. Chapin was a man of too good sence [sic] to do any thing that was unbecoming an officer altho a Federlist he was a

true patriott [sic] who knew not what fear was rough in speach [sic] but kind at heart. A as to our forces they ware [sic] called out in mass quartered in the different houses not organized. General Hall done all that was in his power but the time he had was too short to organize.

That winter the few inhabitens [sic] that returned to Buffalo collected the dead in Reeses blacksmith shop. Those thay [sic] remained tell thay [sic] had 42 men those brave men who fell defending Buffalo was hauled on an ox sled to the old grave yard a learge [sic] grave dug thay [sic] ware [sic] laid in it one on top of the other with out any coffins till the 42 was laid in I was pressent [sic] and saw them laid thare [sic] the dirt was then thrown [sic] over them. A street I beleive [sic] passes now over their last resting place with no stone to inform the passer by that heare [sic] rest 42 hearoes [sic] what a glorias [sic] thing it is to die for your country. The brave Col. Boughton who fell in the battle I believe was not one of the 42 at that time I was almost 13 years old. Those sceins [sic] is as fresh in my memory as if it was but five years ago. Our exsperience [sic] is only the exsperience [sic] of many other familys [sic] that then lived in Buffalo.

James Aigin

* Niles Regester [sic], page 109, vol. 1814, [George] McClure letter to the Secratary [sic] of War, Niles Reg., page 109.

